

NO WORRIES

LEARNING TO TRUST
OUR SOVEREIGN GOD

*A **Flexible** Inductive Bible Study*

BY JAN SILVIOUS AND PAM GILLASPIE

Unless otherwise specified, Scriptures are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, © Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Precept, Precept Ministries International, Precept Ministries International The Inductive Bible Study People, the Plumb Bob design, Precept Upon Precept, In & Out, Sweeter than Chocolate!, Cookies on the Lower Shelf, Precepts For Life, Precepts From God's Word and Transform Student Ministries are trademarks of Precept Ministries International.

No Worries: Learning to Trust Our Sovereign God

Copyright © 2014 by Pam Gillaspie and Jan Silvius
Published by Precept Ministries International
P.O. Box 182218
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37422
www.precept.org

ISBN: 978-1-62119-227-5

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, translated, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

2014

Dedication . . .

To worriers and recovering worriers everywhere.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the editorial and marketing teams at Precept, to the class at Immanuel Church who piloted this material, and to our families for bearing with us during the writing and editing process.

NO WORRIES

LEARNING TO TRUST OUR SOVEREIGN GOD

There is nothing quite like your favorite pair of jeans. You can dress them up, you can dress them down. You can work in them, play in them, shop in them . . . live in them. They always feel right. It is my hope that the structure of this Bible study will fit you like those jeans; that it will work with your life right now, right where you are whether you're new to this whole Bible thing or whether you've been studying the Book for years!

How is this even possible? Smoke and mirrors, perhaps? The new mercilessly thrown in the deep end? The experienced given pompoms and the job of simply cheering others on? None of the above.

No Worries: Learning to Trust our Sovereign God is a flexible Bible study—designed with options that allow you to go as deep each week as you choose. If you're just starting out and feeling a little overwhelmed, stick with the main text and don't think a second thought about the sidebar assignments. If you're looking for a challenge, then take the sidebar prompts and dig with vigor! As you move along through the study, think of the sidebars and "Digging Deeper" boxes as that 2% of lycra you find in certain jeans . . . the wiggle-room that will help them fit just right.

Life has a way of ebbing and flowing and this study is designed to ebb and flow right along with it!

Enjoy!

Contents

<i>Week One</i> The Sin We Excuse	3
<i>Week Two</i> Choking the Word	15
<i>Week Three</i> It Only Works if God is Sovereign	31
<i>Week Four</i> Sovereign Over Everything	47
<i>Week Five</i> But What about Our Enemy?	63
<i>Week Six</i> Presumption and the Path to Worry	75
<i>Week Seven</i> God's Strategies for Worry-Free Living	91
<i>Week Eight</i> Comforted to Comfort Others	107
Resources	121

How to use this study

Flexible inductive Bible studies meet you where you are and take you as far as you want to go.

1. WEEKLY STUDY: The main text guides you through the complete topic of study for the week.

2. FYI boxes: For Your Information boxes provide bite-sized material to shed additional light on the topic.

FYI:

Reading Tip: Begin with prayer

You may have heard this a million times over and if this is a million and one, so be it. Whenever you read or study God's Word, first pray and ask His Spirit to be your Guide.

3. ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes: Sidebar boxes give you the option to push yourself a little further. If you have extra time or are looking for an extra challenge, you can try one, all, or any number in between! These boxes give you the ultimate in flexibility.

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Word Study: *torah*/law

The first of eight Hebrew key words we encounter for God's Word is *torah* translated "law." If you're up for a challenge this week, do a word study to learn what you can about *torah*. Run a concordance search and examine where the word *torah* appears in the Old Testament and see what you can learn about it from the contexts.

If you decide to look for the word for "law" in the New Testament, you'll find that the primary Greek word is *nomos*. Be sure to see what Paul says about the law in Galatians 3 and what Jesus says in Matthew 5.

4. DIGGING DEEPER boxes: If you're looking to go further, Digging Deeper sections will help you sharpen your skills as you continue to mine the truths of Scripture for yourself.

Digging Deeper

What else does God's Word say about counselors?

If you can, spend some time this week digging around for what God's Word says about counselors.

Start by considering what you already know about counsel from the Word of God and see if you can show where these truths are in the Bible. Make sure that the Word says what you think it says.

Week One

The Sin We Excuse

And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?

—Matthew 6:27

Relativism. Tolerance. When nothing is wrong, everything is right and “right” is meaningless.

When “nothing is wrong” and what the Bible calls sin carries the day, damage follows. In our current cultural fray our attention usually turns to societal hot buttons—homosexual behavior and relationships, beginning of life and end of life issues. Moral issues. Issues of life and sex and right and wrong. It’s funny, though, that while we can be so sure of the negative outcomes of certain behaviors, there are others we turn a blind eye to. Often, while calling others to fight their predisposition to sin we pass over our own. Over the course of the next eight weeks we’re going to look at what God’s Word has to say about one of the more acceptable sins of our time—worry. Not only is worry acceptable, if we’re going to be honest, some of us view it (or have viewed it) as a virtue that demonstrates our responsibility, caring, and love when in fact it is only a cheap knock-off.

We could easily spend the next weeks spinning yarns and telling tales of worry in our personal lives that would be mildly entertaining and somewhat instructive—and we will share a few. Our focus, however, will be on what God’s Word says about worry and how we can combat this socially acceptable, yet strangling sin in our lives. As we study, we’ll look at specific passages in Scripture that talk about worry but we’ll also look across the pages of God’s Word to see how worry plays out in the lives of biblical characters and consider what we can learn from both their failures and successes along the way.

FYI:

If you’re in a class

Complete **Week One** together on your first day of class. This will be a great way to start getting to know one another and will help those who are newer to Bible study get their bearings.

JAN

SNAPSHOT

Worry that Spans the Ages

Worry can affect us at any age. Children often worry about things that feel way too big to handle in their minds.

I can remember as a twelve year old worrying about my mother not arriving to sit with me in church. I don't know where I thought she was. She taught a class, so often she was late coming into the service. I felt anxiety rising in my throat when the music began. In my mind I became an abandoned orphan who would have no one to care for and comfort me. I know that sounds really far fetched but that's what happens when worry takes over. The harmless becomes horrible and the meaningless becomes monstrous. Of course, that was when I was a child. "Children are good observers but poor interpreters."

Then, I became an adult. I still worried about things. They just got bigger. When I was twenty-five or so, I didn't worry about being abandoned but I began to worry about dying and leaving my own children. Who would raise them? Who could care for them like I did? And who would? Worry, worry, worry. It was eating away at me.

In fact it was my worry that ultimately caused me to get serious about a relationship with the Lord. The first time I heard Kay Arthur speak I heard her say, "If I live praise the Lord, if I die, praise the Lord. If I live or die, praise the Lord." I wondered how on earth anyone could say that but I knew I wanted to be able to say the same thing.

Maybe you have longed to be able to say "Whatever happens, praise the Lord!" If so, I understand; but this much I know . . . "being worried cannot add a single hour" to your life.

CONSIDER the WAY you THINK

What do you worry about?

Do you classify yourself as a person who occasionally worries or as a "worrier"?

Can you remember a time when you didn't worry?

Are you aware of anything that set it off?

Describe your view of the Bible. (Do you believe it is God's Word? Do you believe it is authoritative? Why/why not?)

Describe your view of God. (Do you believe God is sovereign? Do you believe He is omniscient? Do you believe He is good? Explain your reasoning.)

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

While Jesus often spoke in parables, He never beat around the bush. In fact, some of His most straight-forward teaching on the topic of worry comes in what is often referred to as the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew records this teaching in chapters 5 through 7 of his Gospel. Jesus' teaching on worry appears right in the middle of Matthew 6. Although we'll circle back to this text in more depth in later weeks, today let's take a summary look at Matthew 6 section by section.

SETTING the SCENE

Jesus speaks to a crowd on a mountainside somewhere on the Sea of Galilee in the northern part of Israel.

READ Matthew 6:1-15. **MARK** every reference to different groups of people (e.g. *men, hypocrites, etc.*) in a distinctive way.

Matthew 6:1-15

- 1 *"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.*
- 2 *"So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.*
- 3 *"But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,*
- 4 *so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*
- 5 *"When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.*
- 6 *"But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*
- 7 *"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.*
- 8 *"So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.*
- 9 *"Pray, then, in this way:*
'Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
- 10 *'Your kingdom come.*
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
- 11 *'Give us this day our daily bread.*
- 12 *'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

ONE STEP FURTHER:**Get the Whole Context**

If you have time this week, read the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. This will give you the full context of our "worry" passage. In this famous teaching Jesus explains to a large crowd of followers what "the life of a disciple" is. Note below how Jesus' teaching compares with current cultural thinking.

- 13 *'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]'*
- 14 *"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*
- 15 *"But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.*

FYI:

Sea of Galilee Region

Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount somewhere along the shore of the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel.



DISCUSS with your group or PONDER on your own . . .

What does Jesus warn about in verse 1? What heart issue is He addressing? What payoff does this behavior have? What payoff does it miss?

What kinds of people does Jesus talk about in this section? List each group and describe what Jesus says about them.

What should people who practice righteousness be concerned about?

What are hypocrites concerned about? (If you've marked the word "men," go back and see what the text says.)

What kinds of worries do you face that are driven by a desire to please people?

What about those you influence? Do your friends or children struggle with worrying about what other people think? What kinds of worries do others bring to you?

Who should we seek to please? Why?

What behaviors does Jesus tell us to avoid?

What behaviors are assumed? What clues us into these?

What role does prayer play in your life today?

PAM **SNAPSHOT**

I Thought *He* was the One with the Problem!

There was a time in my life not too many years ago when my husband and I were at a stand-off. Dave thought I had a problem with worry. I knew that he simply did not care enough . . . about anything. According to my life rubric at that time, if you didn't worry, you didn't care. I'll never forget the time he suggested that I "just stop" worrying about something.

Clearly the man was detached from reality. After all, I couldn't "just stop" worrying. Nobody could do *that*—at least not someone like me. He was asking me to stop being me. Worrying was hard-wired into my DNA. For my husband to suggest I "just stop" not only was crazy-talk, it was also a personal attack as far as I was concerned. It wasn't until God opened my eyes one day as I was reading Matthew 6 that I realized *I was the one with the problem*—and it was a sin problem.

Maybe you relate to this personally or maybe you know someone who lives with worry. Either way, I'm sure you've seen the damage worry brings to the lives of those it touches.

INDUCTIVE TOOLS:**Context is King**

Context is king in matters of interpretation. We always need to pay attention to the neighborhoods where our texts live. That said, we need to pay even closer attention in a topical study where it can be tempting to overlook context when a single verse fits our biases while standing alone. No verses stand alone, all are connected to their environments.

JAN SNAPSHOT**Don't Go There**

Worry is a trap for many of us. We look at facts, put the worst spin on them and often end up "awfulizing." You know how that looks. It takes things to the ultimate.

Your child is stung by a bee and you immediately see her arm being removed because of a horrible infection you recently read about in a magazine. Now, chances are that she'll recover from her bee sting with little damage but the worry in you has caused an "awful" reaction in your mind.

You have "awfulized" and experienced all the pain of a real, tragic event. Your brain doesn't know the difference.

Why go there? Why borrow trouble? Why worry about something that hasn't happened? Think about it.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

As Jesus continues, He talks about fasting and treasures. We're going to focus more closely on this passage as it leads directly into "The Worry Text." "The Worry Text" (Matthew 6:25-34) starts off with the phrase "For this reason . . ." which means we need to find and pay close attention to what precedes it since it refers back to something in the text.

READ Matthew 6:16-24. **CIRCLE** every reference to *treasure*. (Use your concordance to find the verb forms of *treasure* that are hiding in the translation.) **UNDERLINE** every word that refers to eyes or seeing.

Matthew 6:16-24

- 16 *"Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.*
- 17 *"But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face*
- 18 *so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*
- 19 *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.*
- 20 *"But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;*
- 21 *for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*
- 22 *"The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.*
- 23 *"But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!*
- 24 *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*

DISCUSS with your group or PONDER on your own . . .

Briefly compare Jesus' words about fasting to his words about giving and praying.

What choice do people have in storing up treasures?

What endangers treasures stored up on earth?

What problems do earthly treasures bring? How can they affect the heart?

What is the benefit of storing treasures in heaven?

Why not hedge the risks by storing in both locations?

How is treasure related to the heart? Give one example of this truth in your life.

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Word Study: Treasure

If you have some extra time this week, find the Greek noun translated *treasure* as well as the corresponding verb that also appears in Matthew 6. Note how many times the root appears in Matthew 6:19-21 and record what you learn about it.

What does Jesus say about multiple masters?

JAN SNAPSHOT

Worry and Women

If we women were honest, I think most of us would say we're natural worriers because we're nurturers. We feel the responsibility and the anxiety of taking care of those we love. Whether they are under our care or out of our sight, it is hard not to worry. Health, finances, relationships, spiritual growth, futures, choices and consequences all give us great concern.

When it feels as if the world and all of its problems are on their shoulders, many women do the only thing they know to do, worry. In fact, in many cultures and social circles, "LOVE" is spelled "W-O-R-R-Y". If you don't worry, you don't love.

Concern about an issue is not worry. It's what you do with concern that makes the difference. I've found that when women find out that God is in the business of dealing with our cares, concerns and anxieties, things change. Life still happens but worry doesn't!

Do you ever worry about finances or physical items? If so, when and what?

Is this a "master" problem? Why/why not?

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus delivers a clear, repeated command.

READ Matthew 6:25-34. **CIRCLE** every reference to *worry*. Again, **UNDERLINE** every word that refers to eyes or seeing.

Matthew 6:25-34

- 25 *"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"*
- 26 *"Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?"*
- 27 *"And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?"*
- 28 *"And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin,*

- 29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.
- 30 "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!
- 31 "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'
- 32 "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
- 33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
- 34 "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

DISCUSS with your group or PONDER on your own . . .

Jesus begins verse 25 with the transition "For this reason" (Greek: *dia touto*, literally "because [of] this). What is He referring back to?

What common worries does Jesus identify?

Do you identify with any of these? If so, which ones?

How many times does He command His hearers not to worry?

PAM **SNAPSHOT**

The Day My Ears Finally Heard

I can't tell you how many times I'd either read or heard Matthew 6 without realizing that Jesus was commanding, not suggesting. My personal sin deafened me to the command and blinded me to the solution. I breezed over Jesus' words "do not be worried" thinking they didn't apply to me since I was "a worrier." I thought, "You can't tell a worrier not to worry, right?" It's like telling an adulterer not to commit adultery, a thief not to steal. Hmmm.

Jesus' *commands* His followers not to worry in Matthew 6:25 (imperative, plural) but He doesn't just command. He immediately tells us how to obey by providing empowering concrete examples. Instead of focusing on our worries, we're to look to our sovereign God who feeds birds and clothes lilies.

Week One: **The Sin We Excuse**

What does He ask them about their worries?

ONE STEP FURTHER:

The Luke Connection

Luke records much of the same content in the account he compiles for Theophilus. If you have some extra time this week, compare Luke 12 with Matthew 6. Record your observations below.

What replacement behavior does He command?

What assurances does He give?

Is this easier said than done? Why/why not?

Did you answer the previous question remembering that Christians have the indwelling Holy Spirit? What difference does the indwelling Holy Spirit make in combatting worry? Explain.

Digging Deeper

Worriers in the Word: Torah

If you're up for a real challenge, each week you can take to the pages of Scripture to identify where worry situations show up in the lives of biblical characters and what outcomes they reaped either by giving in to worry or, conversely, by trusting God in spite of circumstances. We'll point you toward a number of accounts but it will be up to you to look for more. This week we'll limit our broad thinking to the pages of the Torah—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. One simple way to do this assignment is to listen to these broader portions of Scripture on an audio Bible and jot down notes as worriers cross your path.

What individuals and/or nations worried? How did they behave? What resulted?

What characters persevered in the midst of worrisome situations? How were they able to stand?

What is the most significant lesson you learned from the situations and outcomes you studied?

JAN SNAPSHOT

Worry Causes Stress and Stress Can Kill You

Stress is a major issue in our culture. I hear people frequently say, "I'm stressed out," or "I've got to get rid of this stress." Have you ever said it? Have you ever thought it? If so, you are carrying around the burden of worry.

Worry is stress and the wrong kind of stress causes damage to your body. Your heart and intestines are particularly sensitive to toxic hormones your body produces when under stress. So, this whole subject of "worry" is a big deal, a bigger deal than many of us like to think. God in His kindness and great love has given us ways to handle worry. If we believe Him and really do what he says when worry tries to overtake us, then we will be able to manage the stress that it brings in its wake.

God has pled with us and commanded us to stop the worrying and to rely on Him. It's good for us. It helps our spiritual and physical health and in so many ways, it allows us to speak well of Him to a world that is "worried sick."

@THE END OF THE DAY . . .

Jesus commanded His followers not to worry; that means it's a sin we need to jettison. Although we often dismiss it as a minor character flaw that "doesn't hurt anyone," Jesus says "No!" to it. It not only makes the worrier miserable—which most worriers will attest to—it also exposes the worrier as a practical atheist behaving as though God either doesn't exist or does exist but is not in control. Before you call it a day, take some time to write down where practical atheism most often rears its ugly head in your life. If you need to confess the sin of worry to God or ask Him to help you walk in the reality of His sovereignty, take some time to do that, too.